

Dhama to be new CM of U'khand

DEHRADUN, July 3: Pushkar Singh Dhama will be the new Chief Minister of Uttarakhand following his election today as the leader of the BJP legislature party in the hill State where Assembly elections are due next year.

Dhama, 45, will be the youngest Chief Minister of the state and replaces Tirath Singh Rawat, who resigned on Friday night within four months of taking charge from Trivendra Singh Rawat.

"My party has appointed a common worker, son of an ex- (Contd on page 4 Col 1)

MHA corrects 64 errors in J&K Reorganization Act

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, July 3: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a notification to correct 64 errors in amendments carried out by it post-reorganization of erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir in the laws enacted by the J&K Legislature.

The amendments, signed by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, have been issued in the Gazette of India by the (Contd on page 4 Col 5)

Ending Darbar Move insensitive decision: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, July 3:

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday termed the ending of 149-year-old practice of 'darbar move' as an "insensitive" decision, adding that its economic and social benefits outnumbered the expenses incurred for moving of the offices during summer and winter.

"Govt's recent decision to stop Darbar Move is penny wise (Contd on page 4 Col 3)

France begins probe into Rafale deal

NEW DELHI, July 3:

A French judge has been appointed to lead a "highly sensitive" judicial investigation into alleged "corruption and favouritism" in the Rs 59,000 crore Rafale fighter jet deal with India, French investigative website Mediapart reported.

Following the development, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala today urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come forward and order a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Rafale (Contd on page 4 Col 1)

Pak intruder held in Poonch

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, July 3: Security forces today arrested a Pakistani intruder along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district.

The troops picked up a suspected movement along the LoC in the forward area of Gulpur and intercepted the intruder, sources said.

He was arrested and is being questioned. The man has been identified as Javid of Chopur.

PAGD not a 'Gang' for me, met leaders individually LG assures free, fair Assembly polls in J&K after delimitation of seats

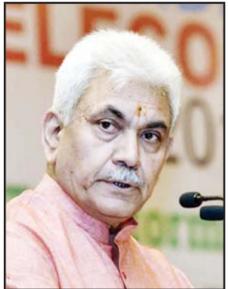
***Militancy will be eliminated, security forces have upper hand**

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, July 3: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today assured that Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir will be held in free, fair and transparent manner and that Election Commission of India will take call on the polls after the Delimitation Commission, which has fast paced the process for delimitation of Assembly constituencies, completes its exercise.

"The Delimitation Commission is conducting its exercise in complete transparent manner. I have also been a member of the Commission in Uttar Pradesh earlier and I know how transparent working of the Commission is. The charges that the delimitation is being held to give dominance to one region over the other are baseless, I reject these charges," Sinha said in an interview to India Today TV network.

He said when the political parties see the working of Delimitation Commission they will know they do their job in completely transparent manner.



The political parties will themselves say working of the Commission is independent. The Commission has been constituted by an Act of the Parliament and none should doubt its working, he added in response to a question that the Commission has been set up to

give political dominance to Jammu region.

"It is the Election Commission which has to conduct and announce dates for the Assembly elections. But I assure that the polls will be held in free, fair and transparent manner and free of violence just like last year's District Development Council (DDC) polls," Sinha said.

On grant of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, he said the top leadership of the country has assured that it will be granted at an "appropriate time". It may be mentioned here that in the All-Party Meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 24, the Jammu and Kashmir leadership was assured fast-paced delimitations followed by Assembly elections and Statehood.

To a question that leaders of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) were earlier dubbed as "Gupkar Gang" but have now

been called for talks by the Central Government, the Lieutenant Governor said the PAGD is not a "Gang" for him.

"I don't think they are the "Gang". In fact, I keep on talking to them and have also met majority of political leaders individually except Mehbooba Mufti. However, I received an email from Mehbooba's daughter and replied to that," Sinha said.

Asked whether Mehbooba Mufti raked up the issue of holding talks with Pakistan at the All-Party Meeting, he said he won't reveal what happened in the meeting but added that no objectionable comments were made by anyone.

"There have been diplomatic and backchannel talks with Pakistan which have resulted into fresh ceasefire agreement on the borders," he noted. At the same time, he cautioned that none would be allowed to challenge sovereignty and integrity (Contd on page 4 Col 5)



A view of track near Shri Amarnath Ji cave shrine in South Kashmir. —Excelsior/Younis Khalid

Maintain close liaison with Union Ministries: CS to Admn Secys
Flow of funds under Centrally Sponsored Schemes relatively low for J&K UT

***Depts asked to ensure strict adherence to new guidelines**

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, July 3: As flow of funds under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes is relatively low for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Government has directed all the Administrative Secretaries to pursue the matter aggressively with the concerned Union Ministries for accessibility to the financial assistance.

Moreover, all the departments have been explicitly told to ensure implementation of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes strictly as per the new guidelines issued by the concerned Union Ministries as well as Department of Expenditure of Union Finance Ministry.

Official sources told EXCELSIOR that in a high-level meeting convened by the Chief Secretary Dr Arun Kumar Mehta recently, all the issues pertaining to the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes came up for discussion and it was observed that the flow of funds under the Centrally

Sponsored Schemes is relatively low for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Accordingly, the Chief Secretary has asked all the departments to pursue aggressively for accessibility to funds and escalate such issues where the departments are facing any difficulty, sources said, adding "all the departments have also been directed to ensure the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes as per the new guidelines".

"In the month of March this year, the Union Government enforced new rules thereby changing the operating procedure for Centrally Sponsored Schemes", sources said, adding "the new guidelines tighten the procedure for grant allocation and increase the scrutiny on utilisation of funds disbursed".

From current month, all the States and Union Territories are required to set up a Single Nodal Agency for each Centrally Sponsored Scheme and have to open single account, sources further said, adding all Union Ministries and departments will

release the Central share for each CSS to the Government's account held in the RBI for further release to this Single Nodal Agency account. Then, the State/UT Governments will transfer the Central share within 21 days and release its own share within 40 days of the release of the Centre's share.

"The Chief Secretary has explicitly told all the Administrative Secretaries to ensure implementation of new guidelines of having a single account forthwith", sources said, adding "Dr Mehta has further advised all the Secretaries to maintain close liaison with their concerned Secretaries in Government of India so that issues of their departments are promptly addressed in the Central Government".

They have also been advised to have frequent meetings with the Secretaries and concerned officers of the Union Ministries in this regard.

Disclosing that thorough deliberations were also held (Contd on page 4 Col 3)

Electricity supply snapped in many Jammu areas
Power infra faces massive damage due to overnight windstorm, rain

Gopal Sharma

JAMMU, July 3: With the overnight strong wind-storm and heavy rain, the Power infrastructure suffered massive damage while electricity supply to many Jammu areas remained snapped for more than 18 to 20 hours since late last evening.

The wind storm and down-pour also caused damage to the public property as several walls and houses in Jammu city were partially damaged due to heavy downpour throughout the last night while several trees and their branches were broken and fell on electric cables.

Several trees near Govt

Over 250 poles, 50 transformers damaged



Windstorm uprooted a tree near Gandhi Nagar Hospital in Jammu causing damage to electric cables and wall. Another pic on page 4. —Excelsior/Rakesh

Hospital Gandhi Nagar and Shastrri Nagar, near Ram Lila Ground caused damage to walls and electric cables and poles. The front wall of Gandhi Nagar Hospital just near the main gate was badly damaged. However, no one was injured or any casualty reported in these incidents. With this, the power supply to the entire Gandhi Nagar area, and many parts of Shastrri Nagar and Nai Basti, was badly hit for more than 15 to 18 hours.

Two electric poles were damaged in Janipur area near the office of Deptt of Economics and Statistics, which snapped the power supply to entire Indira Colony, Excelsior Lane, Lakar Mandi, Bhawani Nagar, Janipur (Contd on page 4 Col 3)

Bricks sold at exorbitant rates, administration in deep slumber

Kiln owners call shots, earn extra bucks in crores

Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, July 3: The bricks in Kashmir are being sold at exorbitant rates with administration in deep slumber despite hue and cry by the common man.

The bricks are being sold between Rs 28, 000 to Rs 31, 000 per 3000 when the Government had fixed the price at Rs 21, 000.

The DC Budgam had last year fixed (vide his office order No. DCB/Brick Kilns/2020/54, dated 21.08.2020) Rs 21000 rate per 3000 bricks including all taxes except transportation.

There are over 300 brick kilns in Kashmir with around 250 in Central Kashmir district

of Budgam and according to a conservative estimate, around 30 million bricks are being sold daily these days as it is a peak season.

By this estimate, the brick kiln owners are overcharging Rs 10 crore on daily basis from the customers these days. And this Rs 10 crore is not being taxed at all.

Although last year, there was some check on the prices as administration registered cases against several brick kiln owners for over charging the customers. This year, the rates are not coming down despite availability of bricks in bulk at the kilns as administration has become silent spectator. Javed Ahmad, a resident of

Srinagar, said that he had been delaying the construction of his house for last few months with the hope that the prices of bricks will come down. "Now the new crop of bricks is out and they are available at every kiln but the prices have instead gone up", he said.

"I got bricks for Rs 31, 000 which is Rs 10, 000 more than the Government rate. The receipt was given for Rs 21, 000 only. Where is the administration?" he asked.

"When I asked the brick kiln owner that rate is Rs 21, 000 only, he refused to sell me bricks. He told me that we are 300 brick kiln owners with huge (Contd on page 4 Col 3)

Two die of COVID, 338 test +ve in J&K

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU/SRINAGAR /LEH, July 3: Two persons died of COVID-19 while 338 tested positive in the Union Territory today. One casualty each was reported from Jammu and Kashmir divisions.

A 58-year-old woman hailing from village Kuleed in Kishtwar district died of COVID-19 at ASCOMS Sidhra. She was the lone COVID casualty in Jammu region today.

The region reported 100 COVID positive cases.

Significantly, Samba and Reasi districts didn't report any fresh positive cases today while maximum 42 positives were reported in Doda district, 14 each in Jammu and Kishtwar, 12 Rajouri, seven Poonch, four each in Udhampur and Ramban districts and three in Kathua.

■ Cases on decline: no fresh positives in Samba, Reasi

As many as 177 persons recovered from the virus today.

They include 48 in Reasi district, 25 each in Jammu and Doda districts, 23 Rajouri, 22 Poonch, nine each Kathua and Kishtwar and eight each in Udhampur and Ramban districts.

One fresh case of black fungus was reported today taking total number of confirmed cases to 30 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Jammu region's Corona count has now reached 1,19,952. There are 1754 active positive cases while 1,16,085 have recovered from the virus and there have been 2113 casualties.

Maximum 1135 COVID casualties have been reported from Jammu district followed by 220 in Rajouri, 149 Kathua, 131 Udhampur, 119 Samba, 117

Doda, 92 Poonch, 64 Ramban and 43 each in Kishtwar and Reasi districts.

Meanwhile, the Union Territory of Ladakh today recorded 11 fresh Corona positive cases—nine of them in Leh and two in Kargil.

No Corona casualties have been reported in Ladakh for past nearly a fortnight now.

COVID cases in Ladakh have gone up to 20101. Of them, 241 are active positives while 19658 have recovered from the virus and there have been 202 casualties including 144 in Leh and 58 in Kargil.

Meanwhile, Kashmir reported 238 fresh COVID-19 cases while one person succumbed to the virus.

Those who tested positive include 96 from Srinagar, 19 from Baramulla, 20 from

Budgam, 16 from Pulwama, 19 from Kupwara, 19 from Anantnag, 10 from Bandipora, 21 from Ganderbal, 16 from Kulgam and 2 from Shopian.

As per officials figures, 70,217 positive cases including 829 deaths and 68,604 recoveries are from Srinagar, 23,309 including 279 deaths and 22,767 recoveries are from Baramulla, 22,625 including 22,201 recoveries and 204 deaths are from Budgam, 14,913 including 14,554 recoveries and 192 deaths are from Pulwama, 13,852 including 165 deaths and 13,462 recoveries are from Kupwara, 16,135 including 15,778 recoveries and 203 deaths are from Anantnag, 9,322 cases including 9,108 and 100 deaths are from Bandipora, 9,641 including 9,380 recoveries and 76 deaths are from Ganderbal, (Contd on page 4 Col 5)

GAD returns RDD's file seeking regularization of CIC operators

Irfan Tramboo

SRINAGAR, July 3: The file for the regularization of CIC operators in J&K lying with the General Administration Department (GAD) has been returned to the Rural Development Department (RDD) asking it to put the cases of regularization of 172 CIC operators before the Government's Establishment cum Selection Committee (ESC).

The process of putting the cases before the Committee is again going to be time-consuming while the file has been returned to the RDD for the fourth time since 2017.

After the file of the regularization was earlier submitted by

Advised to put cases before ESC

the RDD, at the first, the GAD sought a legal opinion from the Department of Law. Once that was done, in the second instance, the GAD sought another legal opinion from the Advocate General of Jammu & Kashmir—which was submitted as well.

Then, in the third instance, again the file was submitted to the Finance Department for review of its concurrence, but Finance Department reiterated its previous concurrence which was in the favour of the CIC workers.

At last, in the fourth instance since 2017, finally, the RDD has been advised by the GAD to put the cases of the

CIC Operators before the Establishment & Selection Committee of Jammu & Kashmir.

"The process will take years altogether and almost all the incumbents have crossed the age of 45 years and above; 172 posts data entry operators were created by GAD in 2016 and also the cases were cleared by the Empowered Committee of J&K Govt. in 2017," one of CIC operators told EXCELSIOR.

It is to be noted here that around 172 CIC Operators working in Rural Development Department in UT of J&K are having degrees like MCA, M Tech, MSc.IT, B.E and B.Tech (Contd on page 4 Col 1)

Owners selling off jewellery to pay for tuition fee of children

Suhail Bhat

SRINAGAR, July 3: Government's indecisiveness over the rehabilitation of the quarry owners of Athwajan area in the outskirts of Srinagar is taking a toll on the lives of thousands of workers and quarry owners who have been left jobless following a ban on mining activities in the Athwajan-Panthachowk belt.

Five years after the ban the Government has failed to rehabilitate the affected quarry owners, pushing a huge chunk of the population towards penury. Citing safety and ecological concerns, the Government stopped quarrying in 2016, but the promised alternate site at

* 5 yrs on, rehab of Athwajan quarry owners hangs in balance

Aripora in Zewan area in city outskirts is yet to be handed over to the affected quarry owners, leaving them in a quagmire of uncertainty.

A quarry owner from the Panthachowk area told Excelsior that the ban on mining has plunged them into abject poverty. His savings have dried up, forcing him to sell his wife's jewellery to pay for the tuition fee of children. "Life is really hard for us these days. I have sold jewellery worth Rs 3-4 lakhs for last five years to survive," he said adding that they are struggling to run their homes.

The quarry holders and workers lamented that the ban has snatched the livelihood of thousands of people. "There are nearly 80,000 workers associated with the business directly or indirectly and the ban has affected the equal number of families," Farooq Ahmad, a quarry owner told Excelsior.

Nazir Ahmad, another quarry owner, said that the delay in implementing rehabilitation policy has hit them psychologically. "We cannot pay tuition fee of our kids or repay bank loans. This has dented our social image (Contd on page 4 Col 1)

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